M.A.C.C.

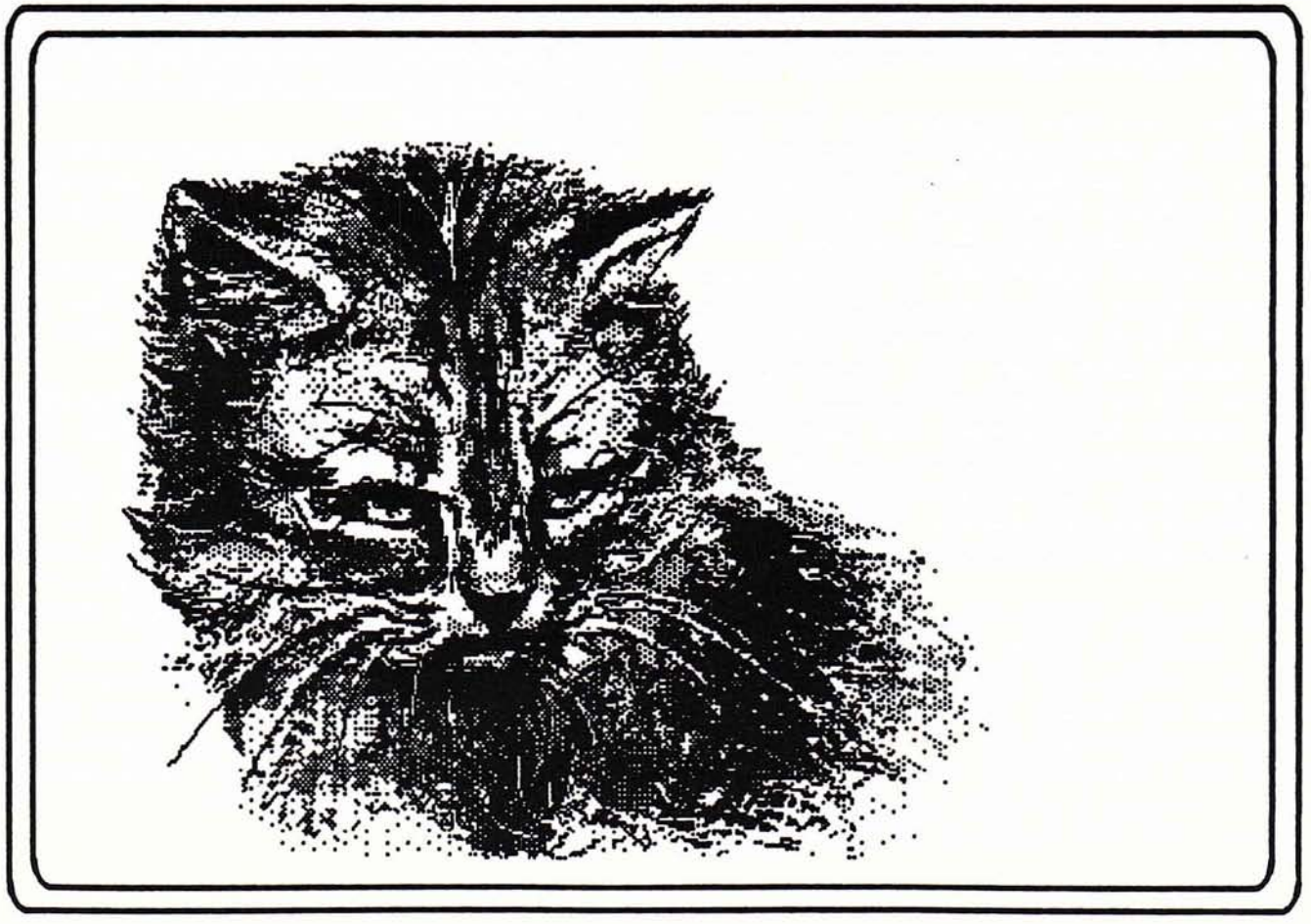
DATA LINK

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 1 JULY, 1987

The official newsletter of the Modesto Atari Computer Club

GUEST SPEAKER THIS MEETING

THIS MEETING WE WELCOME MICHAEL CURRY FROM NAVARONE INDUSTRIES WITH A TALK ON DIGITIZERS



PERSONAL COMPUTERS:

Please read this article and the article on page 6 titled "computer phone fee might sour.
VERY IMPORTANT!

ICC Cooks

Come Up With a Half-Baked Rule on Access Charges
By Michael Schrage
Special to The Washington Post

Blending a smidgeon of foolishness with a dash of hypocrisy, the folks at the Federal Communications Commission have cooked up a way to dramatically increase your cost of using a personal computer. Be warned: What these regulatory short-order cooks have on the table is a half-baked idea that may be the law of the land beginning next year.

Essentially, the FCC is proposing that companies that offer on-line data transmission services through local telephone loops - for example, CompuServe, The Source, QuantumLink, Telenet and Tymnet - should have to pay a special "access fee" to hook up to the phone network. These access charges could easily run as high as $5 an hour per user.

In other words, if you are a CompuServe or Dow Jones subscriber, you may end up paying an extra $5 an hour - or more - to access the service. That could boost your phone bill by hundreds of dollars over a year if you are an avid electronic mailer or information retriever.

Now there is a certain logic to what the FCC proposes. The commission makes voice communications companies such as MCI and Sprint pay an access fee to hook up to the local phone lines. The data communications companies had thus far been exempt from such a charge. "The FCC believes that everybody who uses a local exchange for interstate service should help pay for it with an access charge," asserts Ruth Milkman, the FCC attorney handling the notification of the rule changes. "Everybody who uses the network should have to pay."

Indeed, FCC Chairman Dennis Patrick is quoted in The Wall Street Journal as saying that the access charge exemption was nothing less than a subsidy, asserting, "We don't want the network to evolve in response to various subsidies and anomolies."

That sounds like a noble thought. Alas, it does not ring true. Even in the wake of the Bell System breakup, the phone system is rife with subsidies and "anomolies" of pricing, as Patrick well knows. For the FCC to single out the data communications companies for this access fee is a classic case of having the expedience of one's conviction rather than the courage of one's conviction.

Where's the proof? Here it is: While the FCC is going after public access data networks - that is, data networks that you and I can link to - this ruling exempts the largest private data networks. These are networks run by companies like Ford Motor Co. and Boeing Aerospace.

Though these networks are ostensibly private, they are often linked to local telephone loops through the company's PBX machine (that is, the switchboard). In other words, even though the big companies make the same demand on the local telephone companies, they remain exempt from the access charge fee.

There is no technical reason for this. Let me give you a nontechnical reason. If the FCC proposed a rule that would double the data communications costs of the Fortune 500 companies with private networks, it would face so much political heat that it'd break its legs backpeddling.

But wait, there's more. Technically speaking, data transmission takes up far less bandwidth (space) on a telephone line than voice does. One can multiplex a dozen data transmissions on a line that can only carry one voice conversation. So why should the FCC charge the data communications companies on a per-user or per-time basis? Why not charge on a per-line basis or a per- bit basis as telecommunications entrepreneur Bill von Meister proposes.

Von Meister, who founded The Source and Quantum Link, argues that since data consumes less bandwidth than voice, it is unfair to make data communications companies pay full fare for access.

It should be clear that this whole area isn't clear. The FCC has already begun to hedge, saying that the new access charges may be "phased in" rather than implemented in one fell swoop.

But there's no question that this proposal has scared the entire industry and threatens the immediate future of on-line services and the network nation. "Of course we're concerned," says Carl Valenti of Dow Jones, which runs one of the largest on-line service in the United States. "What happens is that we may end up forcing the customers to bear more cost. We don't want that."

Von Meister adds, "This could well price on-line services beyond the reach of a good segment of the public."

What we have here is a basic policy question: Should "economic efficiency" be the sole guiding phrase for public concern, or should we also be concerned about new services and the quality of those services?

PRESIDENTS REPORT

First things first. I would like to thank Robert Elledge for taking my place at June general meeting. There comes a rare time when going to Atari Club is not the most important item on the agenda. One such time is when the boss tells you he needs to have you stay until the job is done.

On to other things of importance. We will be having as guest speaker at the July M.A.C.C. meeting. Michael Curry from Navarone Industries, Inc. will be there to talk about and demo Navarone's sound sampling and video digitizer products. I have seen these products and it is very impressive. There will also be a question and answer session on this subject.

Hay, did you see what I saw?? If you weren't in Santa Clara, Calif on June 19th or 20th chances are you didn't. Upon walking into the Santa Clara convention center, there it was, the talks of the town. The Mega ST, the Atari PC Clone and the Atari Laser Printer. Finally it looks like they are getting close to a release date for these heavy weights. As I was told at the show the Mega and the PC Clone should be in stores sometime in August , the Laser Printer will be showing up sometime in September. The Atari PC is the first IBM PC compatible with built-in EGA (enhanced graphics adapter) as a standard feature. It is designed around the Intel 8088 chip, the switchable system performs at either 4.77 or 8.0 megahertz and has 512 kilobytes of memory, expandable on the motherboard to 640 kilobytes. It also has a built in a Centronics parallel port for printers and an RS232 serial port for modems and serial printers. It will be sold with a detachable IBM-style keypad, a mouse and mouse port and will be bundled with the GEM desktop from Digital Research. It will be sold through mass merchants and computer specialty stores. The Atari PC system including a computer, disk drive and monochrome monitor is priced at $699. The computer and disk drive only will sell for $499. The laser printer had very very clear printing but I was disappointed with its speed. Atari had advertise 8 pages a minute but what I saw was closer to 1 page a minute. Mark Jensen (demonstrating the printer) said that it was because he was using GDOS to dump the files to the printer and that a word processor would handle the process faster. I hope so.

Beckmeyer Development Tools was there showing his Advanced Business Systems. He had a ST cash register that had a touch screen for a data entry system. They also another ST system set up with an inventory program that used a bar-graph reader for entering sales information. David beckmeyer is definitely opening some doors for Atari in business applications.

David Small was there with the Magic Sack and a prototype interface that turns the standard ST drive into a Macintosh drive. Just plug it into the drive and then plug the cable into it and you can load and run some of the heavily protected Macintosh software with no problem so they say. It looked good but I hope that they build it into some special chips because it was as big as a disk drive all by its self.

Navarone was there showing there products but I'm not going to tell you about that. Just come to the meeting and see it first hand.

One of the most impressive displays was the Hybrid Arts booth with 16 ST's all running the program 'Kill a Happy Face!'. There were contests all day long and the lines were long. Everyone was having a great time.

CORRECTIONS TO LAST MONTHS ARTICLE

Last month I discussed modifying the ST Writer XYZZX.DAT file by changing the parameters in the CONFIG.TXT file. I typed the whole thing late one evening and uploaded it to our BBS for the news letter editor to stick into the news letter the next day. Well it was late and I didn't proof read and I should have. Not to say I would have recognized any mistakes that late at night but when I looked it over the other night (3 weeks later) none of what I read was right. It could have been bad data transfer over the phone line or maybe I just was doing something from memory when memory was already down for the day. I told you to do the MOD to the SUPERSCRIPT and gave the code for ITALICS and didn't mean any of it. I had used these earlier but had decided to use SUBSCRIPT for the fact that if I wanted to underline it would look right. With SUPERSCRIPT the line was two far away and the next line of print was in the middle of the underline. So her it is, the right way to set up the CONFIG.TXT file to change ST Writer to right very small print with very close line spacing on a Panasonic printer. I also suggest that you hide this new XYZZX.DAT in a separate folder suitably labeled so that it doesn't get used when not wanted. You can also stick the stock XYZZX.DAT in a different folder to be used to refresh the one that is on your ST Writer disk when going back to normal. Also it should be noted that the system should be reset if ST Writer has been run other wise the printer driver isn't reinitialized. Set the SUBSCRIPT part of the CONFIG.TXT file to look like this then recompile it using CONFIG.TOS. Use F-10 to call up the fine lined print and shift F-10 to get out of it.

subscript on = 27, 83, 1, 27, 15, 27, 65, 6
subscript off = 27, 84, 18, 255, 255, 255, 255, 255

Enjoy.

-- Robert Johnstone, President, M.A.C.C.

ST Library Disks

Disk 42: JEOPARDY (M)
GRAFTOOL (C,M)
PLOTTER (C,M)
ZPLOTTER 2.0 (C)

Disk 43: E-CUBE (C,M)
ESP-PAINT (C,M)
MEGABLIT 2.62 (C,M)
ML WRITE DEMO (C,M)

Disk 44: GULAM SHELL (M,C)
INVINCIBLE TB (C)
PINBALL-TRAFFIC (C)
STONE AGE 2.1 (C)

Disk 45: ARCSHELL 1.2 (C,M)
AUTOPSY (C,M)
BANNER 1.0 (C,M)
DISCAT 1.3 (C,M)
DSLIDE 1.1 (C,M)
LABELMAKER 1.1 (C,M)
LABLPACE (C,M)
MEGABOOT 1.0 (C,M)
PROTECT.ACC (C,M)
REZ_INFO (C,M)
SLOWDOWN.TOS (C,M)
TYPEWRIT.ACC (C,M)

Disk 46: KIDGRID (C)
KIDPIANO (C)
KIDPUZZLE (C)
KIDS_ABC (C)
SOUND DEMO (C)

C = color monitorM = monochrome monitor

DISK #42

Welcome to JEAPARDY, and here is your host... no, probably not Alex Trebeck. But this version of the game does require a moderator. Three games are included, each consisting of jeapardy, double and final jeapardy screens. The moderator clicks on the selection and the answer fills the screen with text large enough to be seen across the room. Question files (the solutions) are provided for the moderator's use. The program is simple and clean (it is only 15K) but does require a high rez monitor. Pascal source is included.

GRAFTOOL, by Paul Gardner, is the star of the three plot programs on this disk. It is a two-dimmensional GEM plotter which permits scaling, labeling and centering of axes. In addition to the standard functions the program includes exponentiation (^), sqr, abs, log, log10, exp, inverse and hyperbolic trigonometric functions, ceiling and floor functions, and it parses multiple levels of parentheses. Functions may be saved to disk and three functions are included with the program. While it doesn't provide for printer output it can easily be used with SNAPSHOT (MACC disk #8) or other screen capture accessory. The program works in both high and medium resolution and includes a good built-in command summary.

PLOTTER, by Bill Destler, is not as elaborate as GRAFTOOL but it does include printer output as well as GFA Basic source code. Color and monochrome versions are both included.

ZPLOTTER v2.0 is a three-dimmensional plot progra which operates only in medium resolution. It has built-in functions for which the user provides parameters. The output is a nice cross-hatched surface.

DISK #43

This disk consists of three quality painting/drawing programs and a commercial demo of ML-WRITE (ML for multi-lingual). All of these programs work on both color and monochrome monitors.

ESP-PAINT is brand new paint program which includes text and many of the other features of commercial paint programs. The menu bar is movable and features a help mode. The 'H' at the far right of the menu bar toggles the help mode on and off. When in help mode clicking on any other menu item will display a short description of that item.

E-CUBE (E for Escher) is substantially different than any other graphics program I've seen. It was designed to facilitate the creation of ambiguous Escher-like art using cubes. Options include 12 cube sizes, 36 fill patterns, disk and printer output, and automatic recording of each step of a drawing program for playback! The playback feature is particularly nifty. This program won't produce an instant Escher but it will provide hours of fun. It is impossible to do it justice in just one paragraph so come to the next meeting for a first-hand look. By the way, if you haven't discovered the works of M.C.Escher, make it a point to check out his art during your next trip to the library (and be prepared to enter a very different world)

MEGABLIT v2.62 (6/25/87) is an outstanding paint program by Derek Mihocka (of Atari 800 emulator fame). The difference between this version and the version on MACC disk #32 is a considerably faster mouse response time and an improved UNDO function.

ML-WRITE v 1.51D is a demo for Drew Haninger's commercial word processor. The exceptional aspect of this program is that it includes Greek, Russion, Arabic, and European fonts. This demo allows you to create, load, edit, and output files to printer (configurable from menu). The limitation is that you can not save files to disk. The program works in both color and monochrome, but looks exceptionally nice in color.

DISK 44

GULAM (alpha-test version 0.05.05 052587, Copyright 1987 pm●Case) is a command shell resembling Berkeley UNIX 4.X with 61 built-in commands. It provides file name completion, history, alias and rehash facilities and integrates MicroEmacs. Among the built-in commands are: EGREP, a regular expression based string pattern finder, TE, a simple terminal emulator, RX/SX, Xmodem file transfers and PR, a text file printer with pagination. A 62K manual is included. The 61 built-in commands are: alias, dirc, exit, history, msoff, pwd, source, unalias, cd, dirs, fg, if, mv, rehash, sx, unset, chmod, echo, fgrep, lpr, peekw, ren, te, unsetenv, copy, egrep, foreach, ls, pokew, rm, teexit, which, cp, ef, format, mem, popd, rmdir, time, while date, endfor, gem, mkdir, print, rx, touch, df, endif, gre more, printenv, set, ue, dm, endwhile, help, mson, pusha, setenv, and uekb.

INVINCIBLE is a life saver for owners of "the best game ever written", Michtron's TIME BANDIT. It is a short program which loads your TB disk and patches TB in RAM to prevent your time traveler from ever being killed off! Explore with reckless abandon all those never-before-seen higher levels.

TRAFFIC is a standalone pinball game created with Michtron's PINBALL CONSTRUCTION SET.

STONE AGE v2.1 is a low rez arcade game written in GFA Basic. The object is for Willie to eat all of the cabbages in the different worlds without being knocked silly by boulders which rest on the cabbages Willie is after. Ten worlds, each consisting of five levels, are included with the game and a built in screen editor allows you to create new worlds. There are three different difficulty modes. The game requires a joystick and, though it is pretty sluggish, it is still absorbing. GFA source code is included.

DISK 45

ARCSHELL v1.2 is a new version of the only full featured ARC shell I know of which is written in assembler (just under 5K). It requires the archive utility, ARC.TTP (included for your convenience) to be resident in the same directory.

AUTOPSY is a programming utility that dumps the CPU registers after a crash. CRASH.PRG is included to generate a crash for demonstration purposes.

. NNER v1.0 outputs a one to four line horizontal banner to your printer in one of several fonts.

DISCAT 1.3, by Matt Leber, is a disk cataloger which can also output to 2 3/4" x 1 7/8" labels (which is a readily available pin-feed size). This version is much reduced in size from the previous version.

DELUXE SLIDESHOW v1.1 supports NEO, TINY, DEGAS, DEGAS ELITE, full color animation (all four DEGAS channels), .NEO, .PI1-3, .PC1-3, and TNY/TN1-3, automatic resolution switching (all resolutions), optional script files, optional titles, and command line input with wildcards. WOW!

LABELMAKER 1.1 was until recently a commercial disk label program.
LABEL-PACE is a disk label utility from P.A.C.E. (Pittsburgh Area Computer Enthusiasts) written in GFA Basic. It features the option of setting ANY arbitrary label size. It also allows menu selected exclusion of a whole bunch of different file name extensions. MEGABOOT 1.0, yet another program from Darek Mihocka (with Ignac A. Kolenko Jr.), is a boot utility which loads the correct resolution DESKTOP info file and also checks the integrity of all RAM. This takes about three seconds on a one meg machine.

PROTECT is a desk accessory from MichTron which permits you to write protect a system drive without having to set the disk's write protect tab. When you write tect a drive, the screen flashes if you try to write to t drive.

REZ_INFO, by Chris Latham, is another boot utility which operates from either hard or floppy drive. When you boot your system with REZ_INFO in an AUTO folder and three DESKTOP files (.1,.2, and .3) in the root directory, you will be prompted for the resolution you desire.

SLOWDOWN.TOS is a fun and slightly educational program which slows your computer down by a divisor which you select. Things happen on the desktop during normal use which you may never have noticed. Try divisors of 10 to 20. Also, when you rerun the program, the new divisor alters the previous divisor (as opposed to the original system value), thereby slowing your machine even more. As far as I can tell you have to reset to install the original value. Since, presumably, the CPU is operating as fast as possible under normal circumstances, this program does not permit you to multiply your system speed.

TYPEWRITER is a no frills accessory which sends output to your printer after every carriage return. It also permits you to send escape and control sequences to the printer from the typewriter mode.

DISK #46

This disk is for the young children in the family. Precocity being what it is in computer families it's hard to specify an appropriate age range for these but two to five years should come close. All of these programs (except KIDS-ABC) require the use of the mouse and low resoulution. The down side of the mouse is that the young ones have to be strong enough to control the button but once they can press the button these games are great for building hand-eye coordination. All of the games have colorful and attractive GEM interfaces.

KIDGRID is a drawing in which a grid of normal isosceles triangles is filled with one of six colors. The effect is like playing with building blocks. There are a few built-in sample pictures.

KIDPIANO is a three octave piano and organ program.

KIDPUZZLE is a blank grid in which the object is to find the magic squares which, when found, will gradually fill in a picture puzzle on the grid. The program has 12 built-in puzzles.

KIDS-ABC is a sound and graphics aid to learning the alphabet. The object is to correctly fill each of the 26 consecutive squares with the letters of the alphabet in correct order. As each letter is entered correctly, one note of the ABC's song is sounded and when all 26 letters are entered the song is replayed as each of the letters is redisplayed.

The last program on this disk is a demo for a German sound and graphics program. It is an animation involving a modern rock trio. The whole family will like this one.

-- Robert Forster, 16-bit Librarian

COMPUTER PHONE FEE MIGHT SOAR

F.C.C. Backs Access Charge
By Robert D. Hershey Jr.
Special to the New York Times

WASHINGTON, JUNE 11 -- Millions of computer users, both individuals and businesses, would pay substantially higher fees for telephone hook-ups to information services under a new Government proposal, industry officials asserted today The fee, proposed Wednesday to the Federal Communications Commission, is for hooking up to transmit or receive information across state lines. Private or intrastate communications are not subject to the fee.

Various officials estimate that the fee would raise charges by $4.50 to $5.40 an hour, roughly doubling the cost to ordinary consumers of some of the least expensive services, such as local electronic billboards that might list the weather, car sales or information for special interest groups.

Most of that cost would be passed on to customers.

IMPACT TERMED DEVASTATING

"It squelches residential use dramatically and it puts a damper on business use," commented Philip M. Walker, a vice president for the Telenet Communications Corporation, one of the larger computer networks. The impact, he added, would be "devastating". . . .

The F.C.C., by a 4-to-0 vote, decided Wednesday to propose levying the access charge on "enhanced service providers." These are companies that add value to basic transmission services, of which information retrieval systems are one major type.

CHARGES WOULD START JAN:1

The use of information services now pays only a normal charge for telephone use. What the commission proposes to do, effective Jan. 1, is to level an access charge on all computer traffic traveling on interstate telephone lines. These charges are similar to the monthly fees paid by ordinary residential and business telephone users as a result of the breakup of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. . . .

Yesterday, the F.C.C. said it was "concerned that the charges currently paid by enhanced service providers did not contribute sufficiently to the cost of the exchange access facilities they use in offering services to the public."

It added, "Concerns about rate shock might justify temporary, but not a permanent, exemption from access charges." The commission said it could make no estimate of the financial impact of the new access charges on computer companies, whom it does not regulate, or on their customers. However, it did not dispute industry figures.

Neither the F.C.C. nor various industry officials were able to provide an aggregate amount to be collected [under the new fee].

ILLEGALITY ALLEGED

Some computer-industry representatives insisted today that the application of access fees to them is illegal and that the proceeding is based on what one of them called the "misconception" that their companies are common carriers.

Computer companies, according to this argument, are users, not providers, and therefore should not be charged the fee, which was originally intended to be paid by common carriers.

The idea of imposing access charges on computer companies had been raised previously, but some industry officials said today that it had been assumed it would be buried when Dennis R. Patrick succeeded Mark S. Fowler as F.C.C. chairman this spring.

The commission has not yet decided the length of the comment period for the proposed levy, according to a F.C.C. lawyer, Ruth Milkman, but it seemed likely that those wanting to express their opinion would have at least 30 days and possibly more than 45 days.

What this article says is very important to all of us that are using there computers for telecomunications or intend to do so in the future.

On the next page you will find a sample letter that you can use to help stop these extra charges. Please won't you take a few minutes and help to stop these extra charges from being imposed. You will also be helping yourself.

THANK YOU

,title. ,first. ,last.
,addr1.
,addr2.

Dear ,title. ,last.,

It has recently come to my attention that, on Wednesday, June 10, 1987, the Federal Communications Commission proposed to levy an access charge on all computer traffic traveling on interstate telephone lines, effective January 1, 1988.

The purpose of this letter is to voice my strong opposition to this proposal.

This fee could double the cost to an ordinary consumer for access to national computer networks.

As an active user of these networks, I am severely impacted by this proposal. I doubt that I, or many of thousands of other users, could afford to continue participation in computer information networks if this fee is enacted.

Computer information networks are an important and ever-growing part of the American computer industry. There are thousands of networks currently in operation throughout the country, and hundreds of thousands of subscribers and users.

Networks now play the important and indispensable role of clearinghouse for information to business, industry, and professions. Americans in law, medicine, chemistry, banking, publishing, investments, computers, agriculture, education, and yes, even government, have come to depend on computer information networks for specific, reliable and up-to-the-minute information.

Without exaggeration, it can be said that computer information networks are the backbone of the Information Age.

In addition to the many business and professional users hurt by this proposal, an even greater impact would be felt by tens of thousands of schools, hobbyists and students, many of whom purchase computer equipment for the primary purpose of access to computer information networks. Therefore, it can be concluded that this proposal would adversely affect sales and manufacturing of computers and related telecommunications equipment. An obvious net effect would be a chilling effect on the growth of the American computer industry and a loss of jobs.

Please note my strong opposition to the Federal Communications Commission proposal to levy access charges on computer traffic traveling on interstate telephone lines. Please help me by voicing your opposition as well.

Sincerely yours,

M . A . C . C .

24 HOUR B B S
209-529-1219

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Vol 5 Issue 1
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MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS :
Disk Library (now has 8 5 disks)
Discount purchases at various area vendors
Support from other ATARI users
A monthly Newsletter
S T SIG plus ST Library Disks
ATARI User Group Support

{ PLEASE NOTE }
Items for print in the newsletter must be submitted 14 days before the next meeting
(handwritten copy okay if legible)

EXCHANGES WELCOME

Modesto Atari Computer Club
P.O. Box 3811
Modesto, Ca. 95352

Our next Meeting:
July 8, 1987
(Wed.) 7:00 pm

TO : SLCC Newsletter Exchange
P.O. BOX 1506
San Leandro CA 94577

AT :
Beyer High School
Room 10-C (Lecture Hall)
(1717 Sylvan Avenue, Modesto)
See You There!